

## El Nino/La Nina Update

The La Nina pattern we have been experiencing for nearly a year now, was still strengthening at last report. In short, La Nina is the cold version of the sea-surface temperature oscillation over the equatorial Pacific Ocean that is the opposite of an El Nino pattern. In both cases, moderate to strong occurrences in particular, have world-wide effects on atmospheric circulation and resulting temperatures and precipitation. Sea-surface temperatures in the current LaNina are running nearly 4 degrees (F) colder than normal, making this a strong event, that is similar to the long term LaNina event of 1998-2000.

For Northeast Montana, strong La Nina conditions are not nearly as reliable of a predictor as strong El Nina conditions are. Most of the time, strong El Nino conditions bring warmer and drier than normal winters and springs to Northeast Montana. This is especially true for temperatures. LaNina episodes though are only a little more likely to be cooler and wetter than normal in the Winter and Spring. The 3 main winter months of Dec-Feb are proving to be quite close to normal as a whole on both counts. The La Nina we now have is expected to start weakening this spring, but may take many months to end.